

# Oklahoma Conservation Partnership Report

May 2014

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**VISION: Productive Lands Healthy Environment -- MISSION: Helping People Help the Land**

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## Picture It! Conservation!

This month USDA highlighted the value of conservation with a different focus each week.

Sometimes the benefits of conservation can be abstract. For example, think a minute about the dollar value of a single tree. Can you come up with a number?

Did you consider that the tree creates oxygen, captures carbon and provides wildlife habitat? Or that the tree serves as a windbreak, shades and cools the surrounding area, and improves water quality? Don't forget, these benefits extend for many decades over the lifetime of a healthy tree.

It's easy to focus on measurable data and overlook abstract values. Perhaps the best way to highlight the benefits of conservation is through pictures. Below is a series of before/after photos of the good conservation can accomplish.

Soil health and water quality are often related.

Before



After

By planting buffers and installing a stream crossing, this Maryland farmer reduced erosion and improved the stream's water quality.

Sometimes small changes make a big difference.

Before



Conservation improves the health of rural landscapes. For example, take this badly eroded pasture in Michigan. Critical area seeding and conservation-minded grazing practices let this pasture recover.

After

Photos provided by Spencer Miller, PAS, Oregon

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## Engineering Review

### Dam Safety is the Focus of OETA Report

The NRCS Dam Safety booth at Conservation Day at the Capitol captured the eye of OETA Reporter/Producer Bob Sands who in turn developed an entire segment on Aging Infrastructure for the Oklahoma News Report (ONR). Chris Stoner, NRCS State Conservation Engineer, and Robert Toole, Assistant Director of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission were both interviewed on the spot. Mr. Toole addressed the recently released American Society of Civil Engineers Report Card on Infrastructure which gave dams in Oklahoma a "D". Mr. Toole explained the main issue is funding. With limited resources, the focus in the state has been on High Hazard dams, leaving many Low Hazard dams to suffer. There are currently requests for nearly \$9.0 Million worth of Operation and Maintenance needs. Mr. Stoner addressed the Rehabilitation Program and the impacts High Hazard dams have on the citizens of Oklahoma. The report can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/ueO6E0rDDOE>.



Chris Stoner, Oklahoma State  
Conservation Engineer

### Partners in the Spotlight at 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Student Water Conference

NRCS State Conservation Engineer, Chris Stoner was joined by OCC's Assistant Director for Water Quality, Greg Kloxin and OWRB's Water Resources Geologist, Chris Neel for a Roundtable Discussion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Student Water Conference hosted by OSU. The group described their involvement in water related issues throughout their careers and how they ended up in the positions they now hold. They then answered questions from the more than 40 students, both graduate and undergraduates, from across the country. The focus of the program was to reinforce the importance of water in today's society and to demonstrate how the actions of the students involved in the conference can impact the world's water supplies for generations to come.





## Outreach Review

### NRCS Participated at the Tribal "Bridge A Gap" Conference

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) participated at the regional tribal "Bridge A Gap" conference that was held April 7 through April 10, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The conference agenda was designed to strengthen Government-to-Government relationships between federal/state agencies, and federally-recognized Tribes with interests in preserving their natural resources. NRCS and Tribal governments have a desire and obligation to establish Government-to-Government relationships where there are mutual interests in managing the cultural and natural resources. Dr. Carol Crouch, NRCS Oklahoma State Tribal Liaison, was selected to present on two topics at the conference; *Bridging Gaps and Opening Doors to Strong Partnerships with American Indian Tribes that Strengthen Government to Government Relations* and *Indigenous Stewardship Methods and NRCS Conservation Practices Guide*. There were Tribes from 13 states represented at the conference. According to Dr. Crouch, *This conference provided a wonderful opportunity to discuss tribal relations, natural resources and cultural preservation issues and collaborate with Tribes whom are dedicated to improving our government to government relationship.*

**There were Tribes from 13 states  
represented at the conference**



## Water Resources Review

### Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 5-22-14

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District	Status
<b><i>In Planning</i></b>				
Upper Elk	23D	Beckham	North Fork of Red River CD	12/1/2013
Boiling Springs	1	Latimer	Latimer County CD	10/1/2014
Whitewater	2	Delaware	Delaware County CD	11/1/2014
Rock Creek	2	Latimer	Talihina CD	12/1/2014
Upper Clear Boggy	26	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	1/1/2015
<b><i>Planning Completed - Awaiting Design</i></b>				
Sallisaw Creek	32	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights

**Outreach Review cont...****Status of Oklahoma Watershed Rehabilitation Projects as of 5-22-14**

Watershed	Dam No.	County	Conservation District	Status
<b><i>Planning &amp; Design Completed - Awaiting Construction</i></b>				
Cottonwood Creek	54	Logan	Logan County CD	Pending Landrights
Sallisaw Creek	34	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending Landrights
Sallisaw Creek	33	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	Pending
Sallisaw Creek	28	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
Sallisaw Creek	30	Sequoyah	Sequoyah County CD	
<b><i>Under Construction</i></b>				
Barntiz Creek	1	Dewey	Dewey County CD	Estimated completion 8-15-14
<b><i>Rehabilitation Completed</i></b>				
Sandstone Creek	16A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD	
Barnitz Creek	14	Dewey	Dewey County CD	
Mill Creek	18	Johnston	Johnston County CD	
Double Creek	1,2,3,4,5,6	Washing-	Caney Valley CD	
Cavalry Creek	6	Washita	Washita County CD	
Sandstone Creek	12,17A	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD	
Sergeant Major Creek	1,2	Roger Mills	Upper Washita CD	
Cobb Creek	2	Washita	Deer Creek CD	
Sallisaw Creek	15,16,20	Adair	Adair County CD	
Big Wewoka Creek	29	Seminole	Seminole County CD	
Cottonwood Creek	17	Canadian	East Canadian CD	
Sallisaw Creek	18M	Adair	Adair County CD	*ARRA
Sugar Creek	L-43	Caddo	West Caddo County CD	*ARRA
Upper Clear Boggy	35	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	*ARRA
Cobb Creek	1	Washita	Deer Creek CD	
Upper Clear Boggy	36	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	
Cottonwood Creek	15	Kingfisher	Kingfisher County CD	Decommission *ARRA
Turkey Creek	9	Washita	Washita County CD	
Upper Clear Boggy	33	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	*ARRA
Sugar Creek	L-44	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	*ARRA
Upper Clear Boggy	34	Pontotoc	Pontotoc County CD	*ARRA
Caney-Coon Creek	2M	Coal	Coal County CD	
Sallisaw Creek	26	Adair	Adair County CD	
Ft Cobb Laterals	10	Caddo	South Caddo County CD	
*American Recovery				
Reinvestment Act				

## Zone 1 Review

### Cimarron County-Boise City Field Service Center

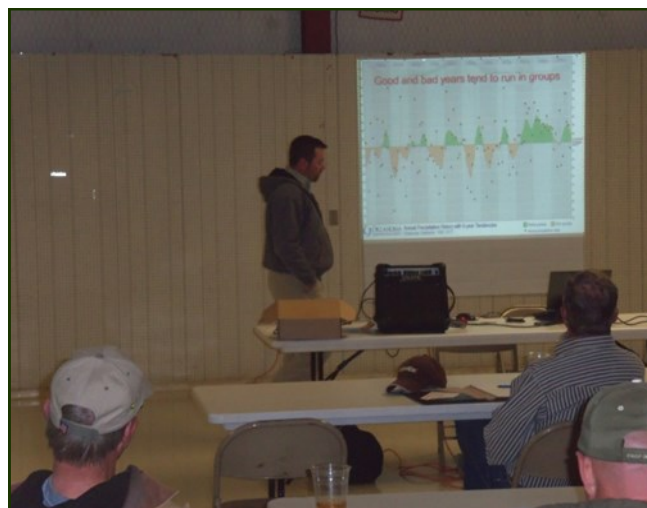
Cimarron County Conservation District, Gary McManus (State Climatologist) and NRCS assisted Laura Parker (National Geographic) with her article on covering the drought in the area. Laura was here for three days touring Cimarron County, interviewing local producers and getting an insight to what this drought consists of and the struggles that come with it. Iris Imler, CD Secretary, helped schedule interviews and assisted her in getting a lot of information about our current drought within the county.



Cimarron  
County



Cimarron County Conservation District and NRCS sponsored an outreach meeting providing farmers and ranchers with information pertaining to a few of the issues they are currently facing. The speakers were Troy Collier, Don Sternitzke, Dr. Sarah Zukoff (KSU), Brandon Reavis and Mike Sams. The topics included; IWM workbook, Higher Yields on Less Land with the Same Water, Salt Cedar Beetle, Native Grass Response to Drought and Listing of the Lesser Prairie Chicken to Threatened. The topics were well received with questions for each presenter. There were 26 attendees. A special thank you to all who came and spoke at the meeting, I believe the producers of Cimarron County got a lot of valuable information.



### Cimarron County Outreach Meeting



## Zone 1 Review cont...

### Kingfisher County – Kingfisher Field Service Center

4-24-2014: Kingfisher NRCS held a booth at the annual KF County “Wheat Growers” Meeting on Soil Health.  
108 were in attendance

4-23 & 24-2014: Kingfisher County Conservation District and NRCS hosted our annual Conservation Education day for all the 4th graders in the county. Approximately 220 kids were able to learn from 5 different booths over the two day event. Booths included Soil Health by Caleb Stone (NRCS), Water Quality by Debbie Carnot (OCC), Bat Education by Mike (OKP & R), Skins and Skulls by Frank (ODWC), and Tornado Safety by Meagan Myers (OSU) & Andy Lowman (NRCS).



### Kingfisher County Conservation Education Day

### Major County – Fairview Field Service Center

The Major County Conservation District along with the Fairview NRCS assisted OSU Extension with the annual Progressive Ag Safety Day held at the Major County Fairgrounds on May 1, 2014. There were 230 in attendance including students and volunteers learning about various agricultural safety topics. Cindy Bierig and Michael Roberts presented safety information to the area 3rd and 4th grade students from Aline-Cleo, Cimarron and Fairview Schools.

## Zone 2 Review

### Muskogee County – Muskogee Field Service Center

Rishell Bowler, District Conservationist provided a presentation at the Tri-County Ag Meeting. The Event was held April 5, 2014 at Indoor/Outdoor Arena in Haskell, Okla. Rishell spoke about USDA-NRCS programs, partnership with MCCD and services available to the public. Producers were informed about NRCS's technical assistance and various Farm Bill Programs that are available to them. More than 60 participants were in attendance. There was also a question and answer segment that addressed the concerns of local producers. This event was coordinated by Bradford Williams Bradford LLC and Langston University. Rural Development and Farm Service Agency also provided a presentation and discussed programs and services available to the public.

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The Muskogee field office assisted Connors State College (CSC) with its annual Interscholastic Contest. The Contest was held on the campus in Warner, Okla. Land Judging, Range Judging and Engineering was conducted and assisted by the following individuals: Rishell Bowler, Jared Newton, Steve Clark and Jake Boyette. 2014 CSC Aggie Day is in the history books. There were 1533 high school students in attendance. We had FFA Chapters or 4-H groups from 173 different schools competing in 17 contests. We had schools from Arkansas and Texas in competition as well. An event of this size could not take place without the help of others. Many thanks to the above mentioned for their assistance with the contest.

## Zone 2 Review cont...

### Craig County – Vinita Field Service Center

On Thursday April 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the Welch, Oklahoma Civic Center the NRCS, OSU Extension Service, The Oklahoma Cattleman's Association and the Boehringer-Ingelheim Company of cattle health products held an informational meeting that attracted over 40 farmers and ranchers from Craig and Ottawa Counties.

Scott Clawson, OSU Extension Agriculture Economist Specialist presented an encouraging outlook of the cattle market today and yesterday and information on rebuilding your herd after tough times. Steven Davied, District Conservationist for Ottawa County, provided facts on the new farm bill programs and changes to the sign-up forms and procedure. Kara Jett, spokesperson for the Boehringer-Ingelheim Company, gave us some insight into controlling parasites in your herd and a bonus presentation on the benefits of the dung beetle. Donna Lundy of the Craig County Farm Service Agency clued us in on the new Livestock Forage Disaster Program and the details on how to sign up your operation.

A beef brisket meal with all the trimmings was provided by the Oklahoma Cattleman's Association and served by the OSU Extension Agents from Craig and Ottawa County. Yum!



### Rogers County – Claremore Field Service Center

The Rogers County Conservation District and Natural Resource Conservation Service hosted the 22nd Annual Billy B Concert on May 13, 2014 at the Rogers State University Conservation Education Reserve. William "Billy B" Brennan has traveled from Brooklyn, New York for the past 21 years to present natural science education through song and dance. He has now moved to the State of Washington and plans to continue coming to Claremore each spring. There were approximately 1,000 fourth grade students from Claremore and surrounding counties in attendance. Following the concert, approximately 963 students enjoyed sack lunches and participated in four activities that focused on natural resource conservation. There were fifteen activity stations setup on the Reserve with volunteers from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Department of Environmental Quality, Cameron University, Oklahoma Parks Department, and Oklahoma Department of Forestry presenting the educational activities to the students. A group of 75 Claremore High School students and faculty members acted as walking leaders and policed the lunch areas and bathrooms. One student, however, summed it up best when he said, "This was an awesome day. I hope we get to come back next year."

### *Billy B Concert*





## Zone 2 Review cont...

### Pawnee County – Pawnee Field Service Center



Outdoor Classroom held May 8, 2014 in Pawnee at Bathhouse for County 5th grade students

### Wagoner County – Wagoner Field Service Center

The Wagoner County Conservation District held their 59<sup>th</sup> Soil Stewardship/Legislative Breakfast on April 25, 2014 at the First United Methodist Church in Wagoner. There were 137 persons in attendance, including ministers, farmers, ranchers, legislators and businessmen.

Greg Scott, retired NRCS Soil Scientist, gave a presentation on the benefits of soil health. Mr. Scott gave a demonstration on importance of organic matter in the soil.

Sponsoring the event with the District was the Wagoner County American Farmers and Ranchers, Wagoner County Farm Bureau, Wagoner County Cattlemen's Association and Wagoner Chamber of Commerce.

Cord Colwell and Hunter Lancaster, NRCS, Wagoner FO were extremely helpful to the Wagoner County Conservation District in securing the speaker and setup of the breakfast.



The Starlight Extension Club prepares the breakfast and uses the monies to provide scholarships to graduating Seniors.

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Wagoner County 59th Soil Stewardship/Legislative Breakfast

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## Zone 3 Review

### Custer County – Clinton Field Service Center

On May 15th Deer Creek Conservation District hosted a No-Till Workshop at PBar farms located East of Weatherford. Speakers were Greg Scott, retired NRCS State Soil Scientist and Steve Alspach current State Soil Scientist. The rainfall simulator was demonstrated and discussion centered on no-till and benefits of cover crops on soil health.



Deer Creek Conservation District hosted its annual outdoor classroom for area 4th grade students on April 24th with 250 students in attendance. Volunteers manned 12 stations where students learned about everything from soils to water, to forestry and much more.



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Students learning to identify aquatic insects in a session conducted by Dr. Grant, Biology Professor from Southwestern OK State University

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Deer Creek and Custer County Conservation Districts held the annual Custer County Land Judging contest April 2 on a farm near Weatherford. Four Custer County schools were represented by 68 FFA students.



## Zone 3 Review cont...

### Garvin County – Pauls Valley Field Service Center

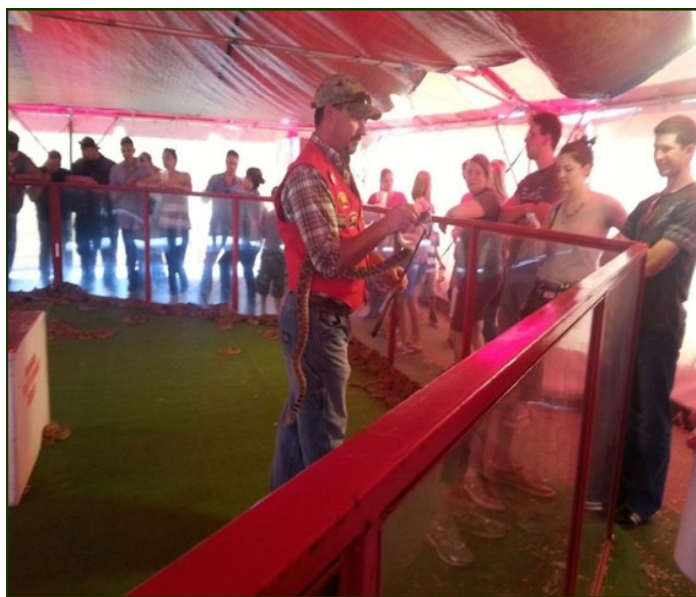
Pauls Valley NRCS participated in Earth Day and the First Anniversary celebration of Pauls Valley's new recycling center, on April 22nd. Several booths were available to teach Pre-school through fourth grade students, as well as some Home School classes, about conservation and all about managing trees. Brandon Chandler, the DC in Pauls Valley, plays the "Every Tree For Itself" game with the students.



### Greer County – Mangum Field Service Center

#### Greer Co Conservation District & NRCS Rattlesnake Derby Information Booth

The Greer Co Conservation District along with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) manned a booth at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Rattlesnake Derby in Mangum, OK on April 25, 2014. Information was handed out to the general public concerning water conservation and soil health. Stick-on conservation themed tattoos were provided to those who wished!





## Zone 4 Review

### Haskell County - Stigler Field Service Center

The Haskell County Conservation District with assistance from the Stigler NRCS staff conducted their 23rd Annual Fishing Clinic on May 7th for all 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in Haskell County. The event was held at the Country Club in Stigler. There were over 200 students and teachers from four schools that attended the event. This event offered the opportunity to rotate through 15 minute learning stations teaching about fishing tackle identification, casting instructions, and fish identification. The students from the rural schools attended the morning sessions and the Stigler school students attended the afternoon sessions. During the last hour of both the morning and afternoon sessions the students actually got to fish at a pond nearby. Each student went home with a “goodie bag” filled with various information and other items and a new rod and reel provided by a tremendous support from area businesses. Pictured below is a photo showing a student that actually caught a fish at the lake during the event. This was the first time for many of the students to actually fish. Over 30 Earth Team Volunteer hours were donated in conducting this very successful event.



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Haskell County 23rd Annual  
Fishing Clinic

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### LeFlore County - Poteau Field Service Center

On May 3, 2014, Josh Ketch, Rangeland Management Specialist at the Poteau Field Service Center, gave a presentation to 30 landowners at a pollinator workshop. The workshop was held at the Kerr Center near Poteau and was put on by the Xerces Society. Landowners learned about types of pollinating insects, beneficial pollinator plant species, pollinator habitat, and beneficial land management practices. Josh talked about conservation programs, including CTA, EQIP, CSP and CRP. He also talked about practices within each program that are beneficial to pollinator species. Attendees learned how to apply for NRCS conservation programs, how to find their local service center, and where to go for more information about NRCS.

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Josh Ketch, Rangeland  
Management Specialist

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## Zone 4 Review cont...

### McCurtain County - Idabel Field Service Center

A Pasture Field Day was held Saturday, May 3, 2014, at the Storey Ranch near Idabel, Oklahoma. Over forty five (45) McCurtain County farmers and ranchers enjoyed a full day of pasture and hay land educational topics and displays. The education event was hosted at the Jan Storey Brahman Ranch located north of Idabel. Topics included weed identification and control, sprayer calibration, pasture aeration and producing quality hay. Farm Bill programs (EQIP and CSP), as well as Soil Health were explained and discussed by Scott Pace, USDA NRCS District Conservationist. The luncheon speaker was Craig Watson, from Sherman, Texas, discussing his use of an intensive grazing system to maximize profits and resources on his farm. A ranch tour of the Storey Brahman Ranch was provided in the afternoon to finish off the educational event. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce McCurtain county farmers and ranchers to new and timely issues to assist them in better managing the resources on their farms and ranches. Coordinators and sponsors of the event were the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Little River Conservation District, and OSU Cooperative Extension Service.



### Pittsburg County / McAlester Field Service Center

The Pittsburg County Conservation District held its 9<sup>th</sup> annual Fishing Clinic on May 1 at the lake behind Spirit Aerospace. Two hundred fifth graders learned about water quality, fish identification, ethics, fishing tackle, and casting. After the students visited the different stations, they got to spend some time fishing in the lake, and prizes were awarded for the biggest fish caught. Each student also got to take home their own fishing pole. Schools participating this year were Crowder, Frink-Chambers, Haileyville, Hartshorne, Haywood, and Tannehill.



Pittsburg County 9th Annual Fishing Clinic